



Trafficking in Persons Report - [Report Home Page](#)

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CUBA (TIER 3)

Cuba is a source country for children trafficked internally for the purposes of sexual exploitation and forced child labor. Trafficking victims from all over Cuba are exploited in major cities and tourist

resorts. There are no reliable estimates available on the extent of trafficking in the country; however, children in prostitution is widely apparent, even to casual observers. These children are sometimes trafficked into prostitution by their families and exploited by foreign tourists. Anecdotal evidence suggests that workers at state-run hotels, travel company employees, taxicab drivers, bar and restaurant workers, and law enforcement personnel are complicit in the commercial sexual exploitation of minors. Cuban forced labor victims include children coerced into working in conditions of involuntary servitude in commercial agriculture.

The Government of Cuba does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking and is not making significant efforts to do so. In 2001, Cuban officials outlined an extensive plan to address the prevention and prosecution of trafficking victims on a national scale, but there has been no evidence to show that the plan has been implemented. As in previous years, Cuban officials over the past year dismissed as politically motivated any criticisms of the government's failure to address trafficking in the country. Cuba has no strategy to address its trafficking problem and growing child sex tourism industry. To improve its efforts to combat trafficking in the country, the government needs to publicly acknowledge that trafficking occurs, implement a national plan to prevent teenagers from becoming victims of commercial sexual exploitation, and end its forced labor practices.

Prosecution

The government has no anti-trafficking law enforcement policy and there was no observed progress in punishing traffickers during the last year. Adult prostitution is not illegal in Cuba, though the prostitution of children and the activities of brothel owners, clients, and pimps are all criminalized and carry penalties of from four to ten years in prison. Occasionally, the government will institute a crackdown against prostitution and related activities; however, these efforts are ad hoc and generally result in the widespread arrest of women in prostitution. Recently, the government released previously unknown statistics covering the period 2000-2004

on convictions for pimping and procuring prostitutes, including 881 trials for procuring prostitutes and 1,377 convictions. However, no data was provided on the investigation, arrest, prosecution, and conviction of any traffickers who are luring children into the trade and profiting from the sexual exploitation of minors. There has been some cooperation with U.S. law enforcement on specific commercial sexual exploitation investigations, but as a matter of policy Cuban authorities do not admit to the existence of a problem.

Protection

The government does not provide protection services to trafficking victims and there has been no progress in this area during the reporting period. Victims, including children in prostitution, are generally treated as criminals — detained in police sweeps, held for several hours or days, fined, and released. The government, on occasion, rounds up women in prostitution and forces them into rehabilitation centers (as it did prior to the Pope's visit in 1998). Prevention efforts are not serious or sustained, but rather superficial at best. The government describes its use of forced child labor as a "voluntary" arrangement and does not acknowledge that it constitutes trafficking.

Prevention

The government undertakes no information campaigns to prevent trafficking for sexual exploitation, and does not officially admit that Cuba has a trafficking problem. The government fails to publicize the incidence and dangers of child prostitution; however, it did for the first time publish the U.S. Government's trafficking-related sanctions in the government-run newspaper on June 16, 2004. But since the media is government run, it rarely reports on trafficking or any other social ills. NGOs and international organizations operating in the country are restricted in what they may state publicly on the subject, limiting their ability to aid or encourage the government to undertake any kind of prevention campaign.

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